



U.S. Department of Justice

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NEWS RELEASE

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Former Tulsa Police Detective Pleads Guilty to Three Felony Crimes

United States Attorney David E. O'Meilia announced that Rico Yarbrough, a former Tulsa Police Department Special Investigations Division (SID) Detective, entered a guilty plea in regard to his previous corrupt activities while a member of TPD's Organized Gang Unit.

Yarbrough was sentenced to 44 months in prison in November 2006, after his conviction in a jury trial for Conspiracy to Obstruct Justice, Obstruction of Justice and Unlawful Notice of Search Warrant. In June 2008, the U.S. Court of Appeals for the 10th Circuit reversed the conviction and ordered a new trial, stating that the presiding judge erred by not allowing Yarbrough to introduce certain character evidence during the trial.

At his plea today, Yarbrough admitted his guilt to the same three charges for which he was convicted in his earlier jury trial: Conspiracy, Obstruction of Justice and Unlawful Notice of Search Warrant. From December 2005 through February 2006, Yarbrough, then a Tulsa police gang unit detective, conspired with others, including Kejuan Daniels, a major narcotics trafficker, to obstruct justice by informing Daniels of an ongoing and secret federal grand jury investigation and then giving Daniels advance notice of the issuance of a search warrant for his residence in Broken Arrow.

Sentencing for Yarbrough is set for October 29. U.S. Attorney O'Meilia and Assistant U.S. Attorneys Robert T. Raley and Joseph F. Wilson prosecuted the case.

In a related matter, Kejuan Daniels, the drug dealer who Yarbrough conspired with, pled guilty in federal court yesterday to Conspiracy involving the importation and distribution of in excess of 100 kilograms of cocaine into the Tulsa area.

During this investigation task force officers carried out three court approved wiretaps and intercepted over 40,000 phone and text messages. In all, there have been at least 25 individuals who have been caught up and convicted in this major narcotics, public corruption and tax fraud investigation and prosecution, which was undertaken by the Organized Crime Drug Enforcement Task Force (OCDETF) of the Northern District of Oklahoma, which included agents from the Federal Bureau of Investigation, Drug Enforcement Administration, Internal Revenue Service Criminal Intelligence Division, and Task Force Officers assigned from the Tulsa Police Department Special Investigations Division.

U.S. Attorney O'Meilia commended the outstanding efforts of the Northern District of Oklahoma Organized Crime Drug Enforcement Task Force and in particular, the cooperation and participation of the Tulsa Police Department in the investigation and prosecution. O'Meilia further stated: "A jury of his peers had previously found defendant Yarbrough guilty beyond a reasonable doubt of each of the three felony crimes that he pled guilty to this morning. Yarbrough, under oath today, told the judge that as part of his job as a Tulsa police detective he learned in late 2005 that a then suspected, and now convicted, crack cocaine trafficker was under federal investigation. Yarbrough further told the court that, over the next three months, he conspired with the trafficker and obstructed justice by providing sensitive law enforcement information to the drug dealer about the status of the investigation, including warning him about the imminent service of a federal search warrant at the trafficker's residence in Broken Arrow. Such conduct violates the very essence of the sworn duties and responsibilities of a police officer and not only jeopardized and impeded the ongoing investigation, but put the physical safety of his fellow law enforcement officers and agents at risk during the service of that warrant. Public corruption is a prosecution priority of my office and the interests of justice mandate that violators face the consequences of their illicit actions."